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Linguistic Activities
184

REPORT ON LINGUISTIC ACTIVITIES

at the

NEW YORK OFFICE OF THE C. I.

by

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P R E F A C E

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This report is based on a two week's study of the linguistic activities at the New York office of the Coordinator of Information. Various phases of the operation were studied with a view to suggesting the most effective procedure. A plan is presented which is intended to accommodate both present volume and future expansion. Recommendations are made on the basis of:

1. Scientific linguistic factors involved in:
 - (a) the translation and recreation of English material into foreign languages.
 - (b) original foreign-language composition.
2. Physical considerations affecting the subjective nature of this process.

All criticism is directed solely from a functional point of view.

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-----CONTENTS-----

Preface

- 1 - Function
- 2 - Necessity of special approach
- 3 - Each job individual
- 4 - Collaboration with other Divisions
- 5 - Staff meetings
- 6 - Physical considerations
- 7 - Organisation of Division
- 8 - Organisation of typical language unit
- 9 - Flow of work
- 10 - Listening jury

Conclusion

1. FUNCTION

On the basis of present activity and of ideal activity this organization should have a two-fold function to the end that high quality, adequate foreign language service be rendered to all aspects of the C. O. I. New York office. These functions may be stated briefly as:

1. - Re-creation of original English scripts into foreign languages.
2. - Creation of original foreign language material, or creation based on source materials supplied from Radio, News, Pictures and Publications, Colonel Buxton's Oral Information Office, and other sources.

2. NECESSITY OF SPECIAL APPROACH

Considering the first function from the above paragraph, it was early apparent that the process of re-creation of English script into foreign languages requires considerably more latitude on the part of the translators than at present. When transposing an idea from one language to another there are literally dozens of possible expressions. The most judicious selection and caution must be exercised. A correspondence is never possible if the speakers of the foreign language do not have the same set of experiences as the speakers of the original script. Literal translations are to be ruled out completely except in the case of scientific formulas, etc.

Effective literal translation may be ruled out on the grounds that the structure of the English language is unlike that of any other language. Further, our writing and speaking technique demands that the most prominent thought be placed first -- then an elaboration of this -- then illustration. This structure pervades our thinking as well. It is, therefore, entirely natural in English to have the punch-line first. In German, this is unthinkable. A special treatment is necessary. The punch-line in German comes at the end of a long build-up. Main facts always come last in German after considerable detail and elaboration. Effective re-creation of original material into foreign languages requires persons of first class language ability who are given the necessary latitude to re-arrange, edit, add or change in any way to insure high quality. In some cases it may even be necessary to suppress an item entirely for a particular language.

Page
-2-

3. EACH JOB INDIVIDUAL

It is also necessary to consider the requirements of a particular language area. In Finland, for example, there is an unusually high degree of national culture as well as a long-standing university and literary training. The material directed to this country must be of exceptionally high calibre from a literary point of view. This requires extensive polishing and re-writing. Great damage can be done by second-rate work or by an announcer with an uncultivated voice. This last was recently the case with one of the major networks. Other problems are encountered in other language areas and each must be considered individually in the light of national psychology and culture.

4. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER DIVISIONS

It will be seen that, to achieve the ends discussed in the three previous sections, the closest sort of collaboration is necessary with the other divisions. It will frequently be necessary to consider with the other divisions the problems connected with re-creating original English material into foreign languages. Information should be supplied in both directions as to the most effective way of getting the idea across. This implies, of course, from the linguistic point of view, that the right translator has been chosen for a particular piece of work. The styles of the various translators should be noted and compared to the end that the most suitable man available (or on file) is put on a particular job. This is especially necessary in the case of material directed to a certain stratum of a country. Certain levels of society are interested in certain aspects of our effort. Certain translators can handle those aspects better than others. I have here particularly in mind such language difference as exist in Germany between the military, Catholic, and workers' groups. A special job requires a special man and the wrong man can produce an unhappy result. This applies to voices, accents, modulations, rhythms, etc. as well as to translation styles.

National stylistic habits vary greatly from country to country. In Turkey, for example, editorial opinions and editorial-type writing are held in great esteem. In Spain, list of figures, names, and statistics are considered boring but in Russia, on the other hand, they form a necessary part of the informative style. Such factors as these must be taken into account when preparing directed material. The foreign language group should supply this information to the parties concerned.

Page
-3-

5. STAFF MEETINGS

Provision should be made for frequent (if not daily) staff meetings. The report of the various language-units (Spanish, French, etc.) can be taken up at such meetings and definite recommendations made. In connection with the staff meeting it is of paramount importance that the Foreign Language staff listen -- every day -- to:

- 1 - Our own programs as they go over the air
- 2 - Foreign broadcast in their language.

From these broadcasts information can be given on the nature of our own programs as well as the shifting tendencies in the foreign language. Since language is a dynamic, ever changing phenomenon, it is absolutely necessary for the staff to keep abreast of whatever changes occur. In Germany, for instance, Hitler and the Gieszen University linguists have changed scores of German words to give them a more germanic flavor; e. g., der Rundfunk for das Radio, or der Schwund for das fading (the English word). A person out of touch with his native language, for even a few months, loses that razor-edge precision which is necessary for quality work. It is obviously impossible for our people to go abroad every few months but they can listen to the foreign stations. Provision should be made for this necessary review-listening.

In connection with this last point provision should also be made for a daily check of our own programs as they go over the air. The person to do this is the head of each language unit. Notations should be made to the head of the Division with a view to a constant improvement. The staff meetings will be further necessary from the following points of view:

- 1 - Routine, procedure and treatment of particular problems.
- 2 - Discussion of previous day's script as well as previous day's programs, with view to improvement.
- 3 - Presentation of original ideas on the part of the language unit heads. This includes presentation of ideas for original scripts as well as other suggestions which will be transmitted to parties interested.
- 4 - Discussion of qualifications of translators qualified to handle certain jobs.

Page

-4-

- 5 - Discussion of special holidays abroad and memoranda to be sent to other Divisions; e. g., April 23rd which is children's day in Turkey.
- 6 - Insistence of same man daily to translate official U. S. government communiques to assure sameness and evenness of style.

6. PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

High quality, accurate translations and first rate original foreign language material cannot be produced under psychological pressure. The analysis of language is a science but the carrying over of a thought from one language to another is a delicate art. In order for this process to be carried out most effectively, it is necessary for the translators to have quiet and a certain amount of repose to mull over in their minds and reflect the various ways of rendering a passage. Sometimes a translator may have to try a paragraph several times or even drop it for a while and go to something else. This is especially true of such items as the President's speeches. The present location of the translators renders A-number-one work and recreation into the foreign language impossible. I have in mind here particularly the noise element. The entire translating (and original script writing in foreign language) group should be removed immediately to a less noisy location. A special set of rooms or offices should be reserved for the exclusive use of this type of work.

Further considerations of physical desiderata are:

- 1 - Foreign language newspapers. This would include the funny papers as well as the regular editions. This is especially necessary for the correct rendition of up-to-date political and technical terms. To be effective, the current newspaper term should be used. It should be used in exactly the same sense every time there is occasion for it. I have in mind particularly such instances as: Japan against Japan, 1/18/49, where the expression "rubber self-sealing, bulletproof gas tanks" was rendered into Spanish by "tanques blindados para gasolina, provistos de caucho derretido que cubre exteriormente cualquier averia producida por bala o casco de metralla". While this is good Spanish, grammatically, it is at best a very unwieldy translation of a simple technical phrase. This could have been avoided entirely by having the latest copies of Spanish papers at hand for reference. This applies, mutatis mutandis, to all the language units. Possibly the State Department could arrange to get recent foreign papers in the necessary languages. It is most urgent.

Page
-5-

Further considerations of physical desiderata are:
(continued)

- 2 - Sectional libraries containing all pertinent and necessary material and reference works in the form of dictionaries, encyclopedias, glossaries, etc.
- 3 - Files of important material appearing in the foreign language press both here and abroad. Exact copies of Hitler's speeches, etc. A translation of a translation cannot be effective. The necessary research work in such an operation must be conducted by those engaged in the operation or by research assistants working with the language units. These files should be in a central place and kept up to date.
- 4 - In connection with the private translating and composing rooms instructions should be given that the foreign language staff converse only in the foreign language. Constant hearing of English tends to impart a rearrangement of the foreign structure as well as impinge American phonetics habits on the foreign language.

7. ORGANIZATION OF DIVISION

The processes outlined in the foregoing paragraphs are of a highly specialized nature. The personnel must needs be thoroughly informed as to the psychology and culture of any given language-area and must be able to re-create into that area. At present, this office is turning out a minimum of 265 translations per week. During its peak week, a total of 360 specialized translations involving 15 separate languages were supplied for the Radio, News, and Pictures and Publications. For the effective and efficient operation of these services, as suggested in the previous paragraphs, a separate and special Division is indicated. It will be the further function of such a Division to supply information on the foreign language press, tendencies and shifts in foreign languages, Fascist and anti-Fascist groups, foreign language artists, announcers, editors, translators, writers and production people. All information as to the most effective means (from a dialect point of view) of reaching all sections of the globe can be supplied. In this Division, all of these aspects are coordinated into a functioning unit.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE DIVISION

Chief

Research Asst.

Asst. Chief

Asst. Chief

Asst. Chief

Normal Staff

**Emergency Staff
(on File)**

Language Units

French

Head of Unit - General Supervision

**Assistant
Assistant
Assistant**

Functions:
(1. Translation
(2. Original Per. Lang. Scripta
(3. Production Per. Lang. Aspects

**MRQ CMR MGR - Universities, Other sources.
MRQ CMR MGR - Universities, Other sources.
MRQ CMR MGR - Other sources.**

**Spanish
etc.**

8. ORGANIZATION OF TYPICAL LANGUAGE UNIT**SPANISH**

A -

**Head of Spanish Dept.
(overall duties)**

- (1. General Supervisor of all Spanish activities.
- (2. Allocator of work according to capabilities of staff members.
- (3. Be thoroughly informed as to psychology and cultural patterns of Spanish-speaking areas.
- (4. Be able to draft an idea and put it into action from source material supplied from other sources.
- (5. Creative writing.
- (6. Have knowledge of:
 - (a) Foreign language announcers.
 - (b) " " translators.
 - (c) " " editors.
 - (d) " " artists and actors.
 - (e) " " fascist & anti-fascist groups.
 - (f) " " channels of information.
 - (g) " " changes.
- (7. Keep abreast of foreign language press here and abroad.
- (8. Check staff material as it leaves.
- (9. Thoroughly familiar with all aspects of staff operation.

B - Translation
(effective re-creation
into a foreign language)

1. Radio material
2. Publication material
3. Special material

C - Special Features

1. Spots
2. Dramatic sketches

Function -

Normal Staff

Assistant (a)
Assistant (b)
Secr. Assistant (c)

Explanation of Chart on preceding page.

By "normal staff" and "Emergency staff" are meant two working groups. The Emergency Staff will be a paper staff which is immediately available in case of emergency. Contact is now being made at the various networks, universities, and other sources for persons of special talent; et., production men with a knowledge of foreign languages, special feature writers, translators, etc. When these are called in on special assignments they will be under the immediate supervision of the Head of each language unit. In the case of technicians with foreign language ability, they will be under the supervision of the Radio Division, Production Department with whom liaison is now being established.

Under the "language units" Spanish, etc. is indicated the list of separate language departments in the Division. The Number, now 15, can be expanded to meet any situation inasmuch as an emergency staff of language experts for the major language areas of the entire globe will be set up.

The organization of a typical unit, Spanish in this case, is a pattern-type for other similar units. These units may be added, whenever necessary, to the total divisional organization without disrupting the flow of work. These units are self-contained in that they have a supervising director, translating assistants, and a secretarial assistant along with the necessary reference works and files.

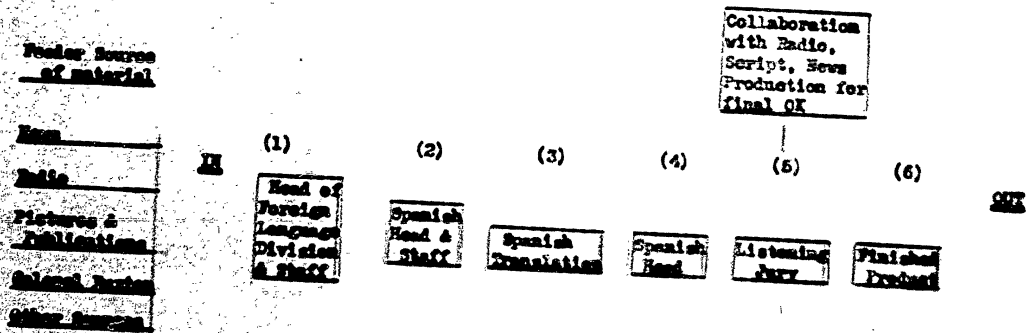
The unit supervisor should be directly responsible for all phases of activity in his unit, and should himself be directly under the administrative officers of the Division. Each unit, further, should have an emergency roster from which names can be secured immediately for any emergency. The sources of the emergency roster are indicated on the chart.

9. FLOW OF WORK THROUGH DIVISION

To achieve a smoothly flowing progression from input to output, a routine sheet and plan-of-work sheet is suggested along the following lines:

- 1 - Discussion and investigation as to special directives for a particular country. This discussion is with the offices supplying material.
- 2 - Discussion and investigation with Head and officers of Foreign Language Division as to special needs and problems connected with psychology and culture of particular language-area. Allocation of work according to capabilities of staff members editing.
- 3 - Discussion with Supervisor of Spanish Department as to particular treatment. Translation and re-creating into Spanish.
- 4 - Return to Spanish Supervisor for checking and O. K.
- 5 - Listening jury to sit in at production and rehearsals for acceptance, rejection, revision. At this point close collaboration with other offices (Production, etc.) is necessary.
- 6 - Final O. K. by Foreign Division for release wherever necessary.

FLOW OF WORK THROUGH DIVISION
(typical language unit)



10. LISTENING JURY

The function of the listening jury will be that of passing final linguistic judgment on all materials intended for broadcast. This can best be accomplished by having a one-man jury (preferably an outsider) sit in the control room along with the engineer and production man. Any defects can be caught at the dress-rehearsal before the final cut is made.

In connection with the listening jury a two or three-man listening jury is recommended at all auditions for foreign language talent. Standard language-quality report sheets should be prepared for checking in various appropriate boxes for reference file.

In addition to the voice-talent files, ability files of various foreign language translators, writers, producers, etc. are suggested. These will enable the Division to contact the best persons fitted for a particular piece of work.

CONCLUSION

In view of the steadily increasing burden on this office, occasioned by the introduction of original foreign language script presentation and the now pressing translation service, it is suggested that the move to another location be made immediately. The organization and procedure suggested can then be introduced.